THE NUMBER OF AMISH IN PENNSYLVANIA

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(This essay concerns the Old Order or House Amish; not the New Order, Church Amish, or Amish Mennonites. Throughout the paper O.O.A. refers to "Old Order Amish.")

IT is a curious fact that no one seems to have given serious consideration to the number of Amish people in Pennsylvania. There are several published estimates of their number in Lancaster County and vicinity, and there are a few references to the "Big Valley" or Mifflin County group, but I have never seen estimates of their number elsewhere in the state. In fact, several authors write as though the Lancaster County Amish were the only community of this sect in the Commonwealth. Few students seem to be aware of the existence of, let alone the location and size of, more than one or two other Pennsylvania Amish communities.

There are, however, at present ten O.O.A. communities in the state, and there are 47 separate Amish church districts or congregations. Of the latter there are 28 in Lancaster County, eight in Mifflin, four in Lawrence, two in Mercer, and one each in five other counties. Three new O.O.A. communities have been established in Pennsylvania within the past five years, two of which seem to be growing, the other one apparently already nearly extinct. No one knows how many times the Amish have unsuccessfully attempted to establish new communities and new congregations in the history of the Commonwealth.

An Amish congregation and an Amish community should be clearly distinguished. An Amish community is a local geographical group all of whose members share the same basic religious beliefs and also similar customs based upon these beliefs. Faith, Family and Farming subsume most aspects of Amish life, and of these three the most important is Faith, for it underlies the other two. The underlying basis of Amish group life is clearly their religion; they are, in fact, one of the best examples of a sectarian society to be found in modern America. Amish people try to practice what they preach and their religious principles thus pervasively permeate their everyday life and folkways. It is impossible to understand Amish lifeways without a knowledge of the fundamental tenets of their faith. Fortunately there is now available an inexpensive and accuratè account of both of these aspects of **Amish Life**, in John A. Hostetler's recently published pamphlet by that title. (Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1952, 42 pp., 50 cents; reviewed in the ECK for May 2, 1953). Even many Amish people say that this pamphlet "tells the truth" — an assertion which cannot be applied, unfortunately, to most accounts of this interesting people.

An Amish community may be divided into several separate churches, church districts, or congregations. The congregation may be a single church, or it may be a district division of a church. All Amish churches are organizationally independent of each other, for the Amish have no interchurch government of any kind. They are in this respect the most "congregational" group among American Protestants, with each local church having its own officials who are unaffiliated with officials of other Amish churches in any way. Occasionally Amish bishops confer with each other for an exchange of opinion on some current "problem" in an Amish area. Also some Amish churches are in "fellowship" with each other. Churches in fellowship may invite visiting ministers from another congregation in fellowship to preach, or may invite a bishop from another district to officiate at special services, such as weddings, funerals, or ordinations. But this is about as far as interchurch cooperation goes among them. Moreover, some Amish churches are not in fellowship with each other. The Amish are much opposed to the "Conference" type of inter-church organization, characteristic of some Mennonite and other Protestant bodies.

A full complement of ministers in an Amish church is a bishop (Volle Diener), two or three preachers (Diener zum Buch), and a deacon (Armen Diener). The respective functions of these ministers are clearly distinguished in C. G. Bachman's detailed description of **The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County** (1942, pp. 113-120). When a church gets so large that all of its adult members can not conveniently assemble in the combined rooms of the first floor of an Amish home, the church is divided on a geographical basis into two "districts" or congregations. The members of each district then select their preachers by lot, and in the same way they usually also select a deacon. Two districts, however, may have the same bishop, as it is possible for him to oversee the worship services of both districts, for the Amish worship every other Sunday and two districts may arrange to have their respective services on alternate Sundays.

It is thus possible for ten Pennsylvania Amish communities to be divided into 47 congregations, as they are at the present time. These Pennsylvania congregations had at the beginning of the present year 31 bishops, 37 deacons and 107 preachers, a total of 175 ordained church officials. A bishop, who is selected by lot from the ordained preachers of a local church, must officiate at the ordination services of preachers and deacons. Preachers and deacons are selected by lot from candidates nominated by all full members of a local church. Both men and women nominate, but only men are eligible for the ministerial offices. All O.O.A. church officials serve ordinarily for life and always without pay.

As stated in the first paragraph, popular knowledge of the Amish in Pennsylvania seems largely confined to those of Lancaster and Mifflin counties, and knowledge of Amish communities and numbers elsewhere in the state is conspicuous by its absence. The paragraphs to follow will attempt to remedy this situation. The ten present O.O.A. communities in Pennsylvania are located in nine counties, as follows: in Lancaster County, with the Amish community east of Lancaster city; Lebanon County, near Schaefferstown; Juniata County, north of Mifflintown; Snyder County, west of Selinsgrove; Mifflin County, in the Kishacoquillas Valley ("Big Valley"), around Belleville; southern Somerset County, south of Meyersdale; Mercer County, west of Jackson Center; Crawford County, surrounding the town of Atlantic, and there are two communities in Lawrence County, one near New Wilmington and one in Enon Valley.

The Lancaster County group, which extends into southernmost Berks and northwesternmost Chester counties, is the earliest, oldest, and largest O.O.A. community in Pennsylvania. It is directly or indirectly the "mother colony" of all other Pennsylvania Amish communities, and it was likewise the source of many other communities located elsewhere in the United States. It was not the first Amish colony to be establishel in Pennsylvania, but it is the historically oldest surviving community with continuous Amish occupancy of its area.

The southern Somerset County community is the second oldest (established in the 1760's), and its church district today is the largest in the state (with c. 180 members). This is made possible by the fact that the O.O.A. here worship in a "church house," rather than in individual homes. This is said to be the only O.O.A. group in the country to do so at the present time.

The "Big Valley" group in Mifflin County is the second largest and the third oldest in Pennsylvania. It was established in the early 1790's by migrants from Lancaster County. The O.O.A. here are divided into five churches, one of which is subdivided into two districts and another into three. There are thus eight O.O.A. church districts or congregations in the Valley, and there are, in addition, three Amish-Mennonite churches here. This Old Order community shows the widest range of differences in customs between its respective churches. The O.O.A. churches here vary in such things as the length of men's hair, the color of men's shirts, the color of their "Dearborn" buggy tops, the number of suspenders men wear, the type of bonnets women wear, and the strictness with which the churches apply the practice of avoiding or shunning errant members.

The two Lawrence County groups are next oldest in life-history, the group near New Wilmington having been begun in the 1840's, with the Enon Valley community forming later, partly as an offshoot from the former. The New Wilmington community has some 200 or more members, with its church divided into three districts; the Enon Valley community is less than one fourth as large and has had a somewhat troubled recent history.

The Crawford County O.O.A. church was begun in 1924 by migration of families from Geauga County, Ohio, whose forebears in turn had come from Pennsylvania. The Mercer County church began in 1942 as a removal of some dozen families from Crawford County. It grew rapidly and soon divided into two church districts. The Lebanon County community began in 1940 as a small group of families from Lancaster County, and both the Snyder County and Juniata County communities began in 1949-50 with families migrating from Big Valley.

Although apparently unknown to most students of Pennsylvania German culture and also largely unknown to social scientists interested in sectarian community life, we are not entirely in the dark with respect to the number of O.O.A. people in Pennsylvania and in the United States. The Mennonite Publishing House at Scottdale, Pennsylvania, since 1913 has annually published a **Mennonite Yearbook and Directory**. This annual volume has a valuable statistical section in which membership data for the recognized Mennonite bodies are recorded by countries, conferences, local churches, and certain other church-related organizations and institutions. The "Old Order Amish (Mennonites)" are regarded by Mennonite authorities as together constituting one of the main "bodies" of American Mennonitism. For this group I have excerpted the **Yearbook** membership data for all recorded O.O.A. churches and communities in Pennsylvania from 1913 through 1954. This, to my knowledge, has never been done before, and part of it is herewith presented for the current year as the only quantitative data we have. The **Yearbook** data are here rearranged by communities, with this geographical classification being based upon personal knowledge of these communities deriving from visits paid to most of them during the past five years. The communities are listed in the following table in the order of their founding.

Location of the O.O.A. Community	Number of Congregations	Number of Adult Members
1. Lancaster Co.	28	2667
2. Somerset Co.	1	180
3. Mifflin Co.	8	606
4. Lawrence Co. ...... (New Wilmington)	3	190
5. Lawrence Co. ...... (Enon Valley)	1	60
6. Crawford Co.	1	66
7. Lebanon Co.	1	40
8. Mercer Co.	2	109
9. Snyder Co.	1	19
10. Juniata Co. ..	1	no record
Total	47	3937

Four thousand adult members would be a conservative estimate for the O.O.A. churches of Pennsylvania. The **Yearbook** does not include the Juniata County group as a congregation in its "Church Directory" (pp. 87-93), where each local church is listed with its reported number of members. However, three O.O.A. preachers with Mifflintown (Juniata County), Post Office addresses are named in the "Ministerial Directory" (pp. 111-112). The present writer visited this area in 1950 before a church was organized and when there were only a few families in residence. It has grown since, but how many families and members are there at the present time is unknown. Also the **Yearbook** lists only 19 members for the Snyder County church in 1954, but there were 14 families in residence when the community was visited by the writer two years ago. This would normally indicate from 30 to 35 members of the church. One of the three church districts at New Wilmington goes unreported as to membership in the **Yearbook**, although its district ministers are listed. The Mennonite **Yearbook** conducts a voluntary census based on correspondence with local informants, and O.O.A. church representatives have never fully cooperated with either official (governmental) or unofficial voluntary religious censuses. It seems therefore safe to say that the figures offered add up to an over-all under-enumeration, and that the number of O.O.A. church members in Pennsylvania may even reach a figure approaching 5,000.

Membership in O.O.A. churches is restricted to adults. One joins by being baptized into the church and baptism is based upon the believer's confession of faith, which thus limits it to adults. Also the Amish insist that infant baptism is non-scriptural. The question thus arises as to how many Amish individuals there are in their communities, including children and young people who have not yet been baptized and joined the church. In this connection most students seem to multiply the recorded church membership by two in order to estimate the total population of a community. My field work in Amish areas and perusal of O.O.A. family genealogies (some forty of which have been published, mostly privately printed) leads me to conclude that the number of adult members of the church should be multiplied by at least three to arrive at an estimate of the total population of Amish communities. This ratio of one to three would give us an estimate of from 12,000 to 15,000 O.O.A. individuals in the State of Pennsylvania at the present time. Ten to twelve thousand would be a conservative and probably niggardly estimate.

IM JUNI

Die Rose bliehe im Juni,
Die Veggel singe laut,
Doch scheener wie Rose un Veggel
Iss manche Juni Braut.

Sie heire druff un dewedder
Un denke gaar net draa,
Wie raar iss oft die Aerwet
Un wie aarm ebmols der Loh.

Sie sin so yung un so glicklich,
Un gucke ins Lewe nei,
Mit kee Gedanke an die Zukunft,
Un Druwwel das sie bringt bei.

Der Daadi 'furnish't die Heemet,
Die Mammi 'furnish't's Geld;
Es Lewe iss en picnic
Un en Paradies die Welt.

Ya well, loss sie so denke!
Es kummt emoll en Zeit,
Dass sie die Hoffning verliere
Un warre zu gescheit.

Der Druwwel kummt vun selwer,
Mer brauch net halbwegs geh
Ihn uff em Weeg zu finne,
Sell kann mer alfert gseh.

Doch hen sie die Satisfaction,
Das Lewe emoll waar siess;
So loss de Buwe un Meedel
Ihr kazes Paradies.

—LOUISE A. WEITZEL